

My View From The Rivers

Both Steve and I drove with little sleep, arriving quite tired in Crisfield on Sunday. It made for a good first night's sleep aboard Solje. We arrived within 2 hours of each other from different parts of the continent - Steve from Ontario, near Brockville and myself from St. Joseph, MI.

The first night we continued the traditional group dinner at a local restaurant. We got to know the many new faces this year and passed out the coveted "W Chesapeake Cruiser" hats and star pins to commemorate the number of cruises attended.

Islands Group

Chuck & Kathy - Oklahoma
Jason & Stephanie - Oklahoma
Richard & Wes, Pennsylvania
Jim & Joe - Michigan
Uncle Al & Hans - Toronto
Tony & Mary - Michigan
Dick & Jane - Ohio

Rivers Group

Jeff & Fran - Connecticut
Kit & Mark - Toronto & Vancouver area
Gary & Steve - Michigan & Ontario

Monday morning had the fleet split into the Islands (B&B) Group and the Rivers (s&*t in the woods) Group. Seven boats set off for Smith Island and three went north to the Manokin River. I remembered my first cruise where Al & Hans graciously switched crew the first day to allow me and my son to acclimate to a new boat and a potentially challenging venue. So when we found out that Jeff and Fran were fairly new to their CL16, Steve and I offered the same accommodation. They accepted and we were off with one problem. Steve had attended the navigation session for the Rivers Group and knew the plan, but I did not. So Fran and I, last to leave, found ourselves sailing out of Crisfield unable to meet up with the other two boats. The VHF got us sorted out and we had a spirited sail North up Tangier Sound, surfing up to 8.5 knots by my GPS.

When we met up with our group, we sailed into a protected beach for some additional navigation talk to plan a possible stop for the night. We were to repeat once more before ending the search for suitable protection in Back Creek on the Manokin River. The next day, Tuesday, produced fairly robust winds (20+) and we spent the day ashore with the exception of Steve and Kit doing some exploring in Kit's boat. Rain during dinner found a second use for the Gottschling Boom Tent.

Wednesday morning's hint of a breeze got us started at 9AM and we ghosted down the Manokin river. After a short lunch stop on a sand beach, we were off, close hauled trying to get around the top of Smith Island with as few tacks as possible. The wind was building throughout the afternoon. At one point Jeff and Fran fell behind and our band of brothers and sister were committed to helping each other, so we turned back with Kit and Mark. When we got down to the CL16, Steve & I finally convinced them to let us help. Steve made the daring move, jumping from my boat onto the CL. Fran was not keen on joining me as she did on day one, so I sailed on to Smith Island alone and Steve provided the extra ballast to assist Jeff on the CL16.



As we came ashore on Smith, we found out about the carnage they experienced the day before. A broken centerboard, mast and rigging damage from a run in with a power line, and a capsize and rescue. The mending took a bunch of Dark & Stormy action and Uncle Al was prepared and obliging.

The next day was a beat down to Tangier with more trauma. But, first Uncle Al had to give our hostess, Pauli, her first ride in a Wayfarer (after all these years).

A boat collision at sea, a broken rudder pintle followed by a beat in light air against the current in the Tangier channel was mixed in with a bunch of working boat traffic for added excitement. Dinner at the Chesapeake House allowed us to get refreshed. Afterwards, news of severe weather heading our way convinced several members to seek the fine Tangier Island B&B experience.



Breakfast found four boats ready to complete their cruise a day earlier than planned and they left directly for Crisfield. The other six boats went down to the traditional Watts Island experience - lunch with the Ospreys and Eagles on a wonderful sand beach. Rays dancing and jumping off shore provided additional entertainment.



Watts Island

At the end of our lunch, four boats headed for Crisfield. Dick & Jane went back to Tangier for the evening and Steve and I were off to an anchorage in Pokomoke Sound.



We sailed to Beach Island, where we found an incredible huge beach. Once inside the lagoon, we were surrounded by protection from waves in all directions. We spent a restful night and left in the morning pulling the anchor up at 6AM. We sailed out under the genoa, fixing breakfast as we went. The wind started blowing about the time we got the main hoisted and we were off running for the first time all week. Surfing along towards Crisfield was a blast with Steve calling out GPS maximum speeds higher and higher as the wind increased. We recorded extended surfs over 9 knots three or four times. But, when the GPS hit 9.9, we both came to the same conclusion - time to reef.

We had the boat at the Crisfield dock at 9AM. Saying goodbye was sort of odd, neither of us wanted the experience to end. We packed a lot into a short week and these words don't cover much of it. It was a great trip, with great sailors from a wide area of North America (Mark gets the furthest traveled award for coming all the way from the Vancouver area to sail with his brother, Kit). Thanks to every one of you for making this the best Chesapeake Cruise yet.

Gary Hirsch (W1321)